

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Greetings from Greg: Page 1
- In the Spotlight: Page 2
- T.E.A.M. 26 Update: Page 3
- HR Corner: Page 4
- Client benefits from VR, BEP and Assistive Work Technology: Page 6
- VR Program Regional News: Page 8
- Friends Helping Friends Beauty Pageant and Concert: Page 10
- Georgia Industries for the Blind News: Page 11
- Disability Adjudication Services News: Page 12
- Roosevelt Warm Springs Institute News: Page 13
- FYI: Tax Credits & A Georgia Legislature Primer: Page 15
- Disability Quiz: Page 16

GVRA NEWSLETTER



Greg Schmieg
Executive Director

Greetings From Greg

I grew up loving baseball, and I still love baseball. For me, spring always means “spring training”...the time to work on basics and get ready for the season ahead. Baseball has always been a good life analogy throughout my career so please allow me to use it one more time in this second edition of our agency newsletter. As an agency, GVRA is in “spring training” right now. You might say that we too are working on the basics. In many ways, we are learning how to catch grounders and fly balls, learning how to bunt and hit away, and learning how to prepare for the upcoming season. Just like a baseball team in spring training, we are a “new team”. We are a team with veteran players and rookies, and a team with a new general manager and coaches. Just like most teams, we have a good roster with lots of depth and lots of talent at all positions. But as we all know, talent alone does not win baseball games. Baseball is a team sport, and in a similar way, GVRA is a team sport. For us to truly be successful, we must function like a team. We have to use our players in the best position possible, recognize how each player contributes to the team’s success, and at times even make player trades to improve the team’s chances of winning.

For me, the season starts on July 1st with the beginning of the new fiscal year. I want a team that is focused on winning, and let me clarify how I define winning. Winning can only be one thing as far as I am concerned – it’s providing the very best services to the most Georgians with disabilities that we can serve as an agency in such a way that we are good stewards of taxpayer dollars. Our commitment as an agency, and as a team, is to those persons we are mandated to serve. That is why we practice and that is why we play ball.

Just like all other teams, we are not perfect, and we will suffer some losses throughout the season. Nonetheless, I do believe that if we stick to the basics and practice, practice and practice, we will be competitive over the long haul. For those of you on this team who are the seasoned veterans, I ask that you provide leadership in the clubhouse and help the rookie players to play good ball. For those of you who are rookies, I am excited about your talent and your potential and I welcome you to the GVRA team. We want to create an environment for you to truly play your best.

One of my favorite baseball movie lines of all times is from the movie “A League of Their Own” in which Tom Hanks, the team’s coach, says “There’s no crying in baseball!” That’s how I feel about our team. We will not let the tough times that have challenged GVRA during this year’s transition prevent us from doing the right things. So here’s to a great season ahead. Let’s play some ball.

Greg Schmieg, GVRA Executive Director



IN THE SPOTLIGHT: AMY O'DELL

GVRA Board Member



Amy O'Dell, GVRA board member and founder of Jacob's Ladder with Governor Nathan Deal.

Board member Amy O'Dell is a graduate of Clemson University where she obtained a Bachelor's degree in Activity Therapy and Master's degree in Counseling and Guidance Services. She is a Licensed Professional Counselor in Georgia and South Carolina. Amy interned at Shepherd Spinal Center in Atlanta and worked as director of a variety of therapeutic programs at Woodridge Psychiatric Hospital in Clayton, Georgia.

Amy is currently founder and Executive Director of Jacob's Ladder in Roswell, established in 1998 as a 501 (c)3, SAIS-SACS accredited pre-K through 12th grade private school that educates children with any neurodevelopmental challenge, while about 60% have been

diagnosed with Autism neurological disorders. There are no age limits at Jacob's Ladder, with students' ages ranging as young as 18 months and as old as 52 years due to the belief that it's never too

"I know that there is hope for any child who is learning with differences, no matter how great or small those difference might be."

- Amy O'Dell

early or too late to benefit from neurodevelopmental intervention. The reason Jacob's Ladder can serve such a wide range is because every student's program is customized to suit the individual.

After the birth of her 2nd child, Jacob, Amy realized he would re-

quire additional help and support to succeed. Through research, study and partnership with other professionals, she developed the holistic Jacob's Ladder approach that considers four key domains: neurodevelopmental, physiological, learning style, and emotional/behavioral/social. After receiving intensive targeted interventions and therapies from age two, Jacob continues to grow and to excel at age 19. The child who could not retain five letters of the alphabet at age six can now read and comprehend at a 12th grade level. The child who struggled to stand and walk now loves to run, wrestle, and play football. Jacob is preparing for his future following high-school graduation, with plans to attend college.

Amy stated the following; "I believe with all that I am that every child can progress towards their highest potential if given the right stimulation with enough frequency and intensity. I know that there is hope for any child who is learning with differences, no matter how great or small those differences might be."

To learn more about Jacob's Ladder and see inspiring videos and success stories, visit the website at <http://jacobs laddercenter.com/>.

Contributor: Daronne Patterson

Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency



Project T.E.A.M. 26

Total Employment for American Military 26 VETERANS JOBS & RESOURCES FAIRS

T.E.A.M. 26 - Successful Veterans Jobs and Resources Fairs

- Carl McRae

In July, 2012 the GVRA initiated the T.E.A.M. 26 initiative to help veterans with disabilities achieve gainful employment through robust jobs and resources fairs. The project is called T.E.A.M. 26, which is an acronym meaning Total Employment for American Military. The number 26 is the code used by the VR Program to indicate successful employment outcomes for those served. Members of T.E.A.M. 26 include Project Director Carl McRae, Program Coordinator Gene Washington and VR staff volunteers who have a personal passion to serve veterans. T.E.A.M. 26 project staff organizes community partners in Jobs and Resources Fairs that connect veterans with potential employers and other resources. While the services offered by the VR program focuses on veterans with disabilities, these Jobs and Resources Fairs are open to all veterans.

T.E.A.M. 26 held the first of a series of Jobs and Resources Fairs to be conducted statewide on December

"What makes us different from many Job Fairs for veterans is that we are staying engaged with all the participants to ensure that they receive consistent follow-up services after the event."

Gene Washington,

Team 26 Project Coordinator

13th at the Workforce Development Agency of Atlanta. To date over 16 veterans who attended that event have received jobs due to the consistent follow-up activity implemented by Carl and Gene. Gene emphasizes the importance of this follow-up: "What makes us different from many Job Fairs for veterans is that we are staying engaged with all the participants to ensure that they receive consistent follow-up services after the event". The second T.E.A.M. 26 Jobs and Resources Fair was held in Augusta on March 4th. With over 79 employers participating, more than 107 veterans attended the event and nine of them obtained jobs

that very day. Additionally, 26 veterans received viable vocational opportunities that may lead them to a job. At least 30 participating veterans self-identified as having a disability and will receive follow up activities from the Veterans VR Counselor for the in Augusta Region, Dorothy McKenzie.

- *Over 200 employers and resources participated in the two TEAM 26 events so far*
- *35 veterans have been gainfully employed*
- *At least 60 veterans have self-identified disabilities and are receiving follow-up services from VR*

The next T.E.A.M. 26 event will be held on May 16, 2013, at the Sonoraville Recreation Center on 7494 Fairmount Hwy SE Calhoun, GA 30701 beginning at 10:00 a.m. and ending at 2:00 p.m. Pre-conference activities begin at 9:00 a.m. including resume preparation and interview skills training.



HR CORNER

As mentioned in the March newsletter, Human Resources is in the process of designing an organizational structure to support all programs and departments within the Agency. Below you will find the names and phones numbers for the current HR staff:

GVRA HUMAN RESOURCES

Kathy Albritton, Director (706) 655-5170

TALENT ACQUISITION, CLASSIFICATION, COMPENSATION, & ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Sheryl Wilhite, Manager (Admin, BEP, VR) 404-232-1971

Jonelle Samuel, Analyst 404-232-1721

Dawnn Johnson, Manager (DAS, RWS, GIB) 404-232-1940

Jennifer Marshall, Analyst 706-655-5518

EMPLOYEE/MANAGEMENT RELATIONS

Travis Salley, Manager 404-232-1992

Laura Stokes, Analyst 706-655-5186

OPERATIONS/BENEFITS

Janie Henderson, Manager 706-655-5519

Quinyata Cameron, Benefits 706-655-5174

Lisa Zaccaro, Transactions 706-655-5171

Lacarrious Manuel, Transactions 706-655-5173

WELCOME NEW GVRA EMPLOYEES

DISABILITY ADJUDICATION SERVICES

Shirley Wilson; Thomas Sigman

HUMAN RESOURCES

Dawnn Johnson; Lisa Zaccaro

BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM

Elizabeth McGarey

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

Thercia Hodge

GEORGIA INDUSTRIES FOR THE BLIND—BAINBRIDGE

Thomas Hayes; Christina Jones; Cynthia Mitchell; Kenneth Davis; Rixon Smith

FINANCIAL SERVICES

Mark Muzii



HR CORNER

RECENT RETIREES

DISABILITY ADJUDICATION SERVICES

Julia Moon

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Janice Berry

ROOSEVELT WARM SPRINGS

Sam Howe

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

Wayne Ammons; Dianne Davis; Allan Green; Marcia Sitton; Melodie Smith

GEORGIA INDUSTRIES FOR THE BLIND—BAINBRIDGE

Leisa Butler; Theresa Butler

CONGRATULATIONS— RENEE GIEDL

Special Kudos to **Renee Giedl**, the new Regional Director for Regions 10 & 11. Renee obtained her M.S. in Rehabilitation Counseling degree from the University of North Texas. She began her career with Georgia's Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program in 1997, where she worked as a Rehabilitation Counselor for 5 years before being promoted to a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor in 2002. She has maintained her Certified Rehabilitation Certification

(CRC) since 2002. She is a 2003 graduate of the Georgia Department of Labor's EXCEL program. In 2003, she was promoted to Rehabilitation Unit Manager. In September 2012, Renee was promoted to Regional Director for Regions 9 & 12. Renee formerly served on the Policy Committee and the Quality Assurance Redevelopment Group. Renee has worked as an Adjunct Professor for Thomas University since 2008 and San Diego State University since 2009.

SAVE THE DATE—VR STATE PLAN PUBLIC HEARINGS

In conjunction with the State Rehabilitation Council, GVRA is holding public hearings in five cities statewide to give stakeholders the opportunity to comment on the FY 14-16 VR State Plan.

Details on the locations are forthcoming, and the dates and times for each city are:



- | | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|------------|
| • Thursday, May 9th | 9:00 AM—11:00 AM | Tifton |
| • Thursday, May 9th | 4:00 PM— 6:00 PM | Statesboro |
| • Friday, May 10th | 11:00 AM—12:00 PM | Macon |
| • Monday, May 13th | 10:00 AM—12:00 PM | Atlanta |
| • Tuesday, May 14th | 10:30 AM—12:30 PM | Cumming |

Client Benefits From Vocational Rehabilitation Program and Business Enterprise Program Teamwork and the Latest in Assistive Technology



Shawn Williams
Georgia VR Client &
BEP Vendor

As a young man working in his father's store, **Shawn Williams** gained skills in customer service that he has continued to use throughout his life. Diagnosed with glaucoma at 18 y/o, he then worked in the hospitality field, climbing his way up to the position of general manager. From 2009 to 2010, his vision gradually declined. The eye drops that he had been using for treatment of the glaucoma were no longer working, and eye surgery was not helpful. By the fall of 2010, Mr. Williams was blind. Desiring to run his own **Business Enterprise Program (BEP)** business, he sought assistance from **Vocational Rehabilitation**.

Kim Wagner, CRC, was the counselor who guided Mr. Williams through the process of determining what services would be needed in order for him to reach his goal of running his own BEP business. As part of that process, Ms. Wagner determined that Mr. Williams would benefit from an **Assistive Work Technology (AWT)** evaluation and a referral was made. **April Evans, Occupational Therapist** and **Mike Hartley, Rehab Technologist** in Augusta completed an initial evaluation with Mr. Williams at his

"You guys have been so helpful and were so willing to travel and come and teach me."

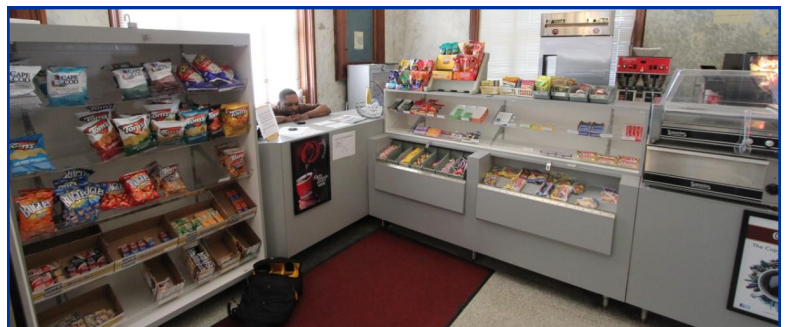
- Shawn Williams



William Augustus Bootle Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse on 475 Mulberry Street Macon, Georgia where Ms. Shawn Williams runs his vending business.

home. During the evaluation, Mr. Williams appeared hesitant as AWT staff discussed the newer technology options of using his **iPhone** and potentially an **iPad** with voice over to operate his BEP business. Being a wise businessman, however, Mr. Williams said, "If an iPad costs \$800 and comes with voice over on it that will allow me to use it, I don't know why you would spend \$800 on a laptop computer and then have to spend another \$1,300 to buy JAWS software that will allow me to use it." Once AWT staff completed the research on apps that would be beneficial to Mr. Williams in his BEP business, a report was generated with recommendations for technology that could provide the necessary accommodations for Mr. Williams to operate his BEP business. Ms. Wagner was very open to supporting

the client in using the newer technology of the iPad and the apps. Knowing that his BEP placement would soon begin, Ms. Wagner and her RA, **Pamela Eaton**, were prompt in moving forward with the purchase of the recommended equipment. Mr. Williams began to work at the snack bar at the courthouse in Macon, and he also has vending machines at six additional sites, including the Secretary of State's office. His son assists him with the business, and they make a great team. AWT staff followed up with Mr. Williams to provide basic training with voice over on the iPad and the use of apps that the client would use to run his business, including the **Looktel Money Reader** app for identifying bills, the **Looktel Recognizer** app and **Tap Tap See** app for identifying items at the snack bar, and the mail app for emailing his monthly report. He is learning to use the **Numbers** app for gener-



Mr. Williams' snack bar and vending station in at the federal courthouse in Macon GA. When in downtown Macon, please drop by for a refreshing cold beverage, a cup of piping hot coffee or a quick snack.



Shawn Williams — Businessman; Taxpayer and a Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency interagency success story. Mr. Williams is grateful to the services rendered to him by both the Vocational Rehabilitation Program and Business Enterprise Program.

ating his monthly report. Mr. Williams continues to improve his skills with the use of the iPad technology. Ms. Wagner gave her approval for the client to begin training with Fedora Outlier. Mr. Williams says that he has found this training to be extremely helpful in furthering his skills and efficiency with using the iPad and iPhone technology, giving their training “kudos and two thumbs up.” When it comes to the use of the iPad technology to run his business, Mr. Williams does not hesitate to comment, “I love it...It is needed.” Regarding his level of satisfaction with the AWT services that he received, he kindly reflects, “You guys have been so helpful and were so willing to travel and come and teach

me. You would be at the snack bar for three hours, patiently waiting for me while I checked out customers.” Mr. Williams is a remarkable person who has been a delight to assist toward his vocational goal of running his own BEP business. AWT staff have witnessed firsthand numerous interactions between Mr. Williams and his customers and have always been impressed by his outgoing, positive attitude. He has used that positive attitude and his determination to learn this new technology that will benefit him and his business. In a time where great customer service can sometimes be difficult to find, Mr. Williams is a refreshing exception. When it comes to serving his customers, Mr. Williams’ philosophy is to “Make sure they leave with a smile.”

“Kudos and two thumbs up!...”

“I love it... It is needed.”

Shawn Williams on the assistive technology solution recommended by the AWT Team

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

For more information on what AWT can do for you, contact the local rehabilitation technologist in your region.

For additional information about the apps mentioned in the article, please visit the following websites:

Looktel Money Reader: <http://www.looktel.com/moneyreader>

Looktel Recognizer: <http://www.looktel.com/recognizer>

Numbers: <http://www.apple.com/iwork/numbers/>

Tap Tap See: <http://www.taptap.biz/>

VISION WALK 2013

The Foundation Fighting Blindness sponsors an annual Vision Walk that began this year in Atlanta’s Piedmont Park on March 24. The money raised funds research for retinal degenerative diseases. For the past three years, Pricilla Peters-Ward has been the leader in organizing the “VR Counselors of the Blind/Visually Impaired Team”. Team members in the photo above include (left to right): **Shirley Robinson, Jack Gilson, Miranda Lemon, Pricilla Peters-Ward, Beth Frey, and Beth’s daughter Melanie Berry.** Shirley’s husband Richard who also participated in the walk is the photographer. This team was one of 57 teams with a total of 625 registered walkers who raised \$115,690.



VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM: REGIONAL NEWS

REGION 5

On March 11th a group of Transition Counselors and RUMs from Region 5 attended tours of the Kennesaw State University Academy of Inclusive Education and Cave Springs Rehabilitation Center in order to learn more about each of these programs and what services they provide.

On March 18th Rebecca Williamson, VRC for Transition, participated in a presentation entitled *Enhancing Transition Collaboration With VR*

with Greg Schmieg, Tangye Teague, and Twyla Crump at the DOE Spring Leadership Conference at the Classic Center in Athens, GA. The predominant attendees were Special Ed Directors and other Special Education leadership staff. Ms. Williamson's piece of the presentation primarily focused on information about her involvement in a VR case from referral to closure and how she interfaces with the school to best serve the students. Several VR staff from Region 5 participated

in the planning and execution of the 2013 NEGA Disability Expo and Transition Conference at UGA in Athens GA held on Saturday, March 30th. VR staff had a booth in the exhibit hall, participated in a panel discussion on Transition to Work, and served as presenters for one of the conference concurrent sessions on The Role of Vocational Rehabilitation in Transition. VR staff also created an exhibit showcasing transition success stories across the region. **By Shari Kaplan**

REGION 16

Becky Sills, Director of Georgia VR Deaf Services, met recently with students at Flint River Academy in Woodbury, GA to discuss vocational options for careers in the field of deafness. Joining her were three local residents from the deaf community. The 8th grade students had learned to fingerspell their names prior to the program and each stood up and introduced them-

selves in sign language to the visitors.

The deaf community members answered questions from the students about their educational and work experience. Ms. Sills shared information about the difference in American Sign Language (ASL) and English and the vocational options as a Deafness Professional. She also encouraged the students to pursue vocations in the field of

deafness as Sign Language Interpreters or Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (RCD). Currently, it is very difficult to meet the needs of our consumers because of the severe shortage of qualified interpreters and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf.

Additional sessions will be planned with other school systems to encourage consideration of the professions of deafness as a career

Becky Sills recently represented the Georgia VR Program at the National Deaf Education Summit, sponsored by a national grant for transition of Deaf and Hard of Hearing students (Pepnet.org). The Summit was held in Austin, TX. Ms. Sills served on a plenary panel called, "Transition to What" and shared information about the GA VR program and the importance of not only focusing on deaf and hard of

hearing students who are college bound, but also the need to develop transition programs and resources for the 80% of these students who will not go on to college after high school graduation.

While at the summit, various other state VR representatives shared information regarding the RSA approved "Certified Time Match" as a way to improve transition outcomes and also draw down addi-

tional federal matching dollars. Ms. Sills shared this information with GA VR Administrators, who are now investigating the opportunity for GA VR.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM: REGIONAL NEWS

REGION 17



Dr. Brian Hickox at his chiropractic clinic in Valdosta.

Dr. Brian Hickox was born with congenital toxoplasmosis resulting in low vision. After graduating high school in 1994, Brian attended Middle Georgia College in Cochran. Unfortunately, while in his freshman year there, he was robbed at gunpoint and hit in the head with a

gun. He was transferred to the Sherman College of Chiropractic in Spartanburg, SC. He sought assistance from VR for adaptive technology and financial assistance. Sherman College had difficulty meeting Brian's accommodation requirements. As a result, he required seven years to complete a three and

half year program. The VR Assistive Work Technology (AWT) Team and the VR Counselor worked closely with Brian to support his education. The Counselor assisted Brian to advocate with Sherman College to meet their responsibilities for accessible training material. Assistive tools such as a tactile image enhancer computer with adaptive software helped him access materials.

Brian knew he wanted to be a chiropractor since he was a junior in high school, so he

transferred to the Sherman College of Chiropractic in Spartanburg, SC. He sought assistance from VR for adaptive technology and financial assistance. Sherman College had difficulty meeting Brian's accommodation requirements. As a result, he required seven years to complete a three and

half year program. The VR Assistive Work Technology (AWT) Team and the VR Counselor worked closely with Brian to support his education. The Counselor assisted Brian to advocate with Sherman College to meet their responsibilities for accessible training material. Assistive tools such as a tactile image enhancer computer with adaptive software helped him access materials. Upon graduation, Brian advocated for full access to the testing material when he completed the board exams. Brian opened his own office as Dr. Hickox in May 2012 with local support from newspaper articles and referrals from another local Chiropractor. The AWT staff worked many hours to help him develop a software system that will track his patient care and profiles and perform business functions. Brian's business is growing, and he provides a high quality of service while embracing his blindness.

HIGH SCHOOL HIGH TECH

The Georgia High School High Tech (HSHT) program is designed to transition high school students with all types of disabilities "from learning to earning" by reducing the dropout rate, increasing enrollment in post-secondary education and training through participation in education, vocational and employment related activities. HSHT provides high school students with all types of dis-

abilities the opportunity to explore employment options and/or post-secondary education options leading to gainful employment with an emphasis on careers in higher paying technology fields.

During the quarter ending December 31, 2012, Georgia HSHT served 583 students with disabilities in 47 high schools in 19 counties. HSHT continues to provide positive outcomes, success-

fully providing essential skills and competencies to Georgia's high school students with disabilities. One highlight of the year is that 119 students competed in the computer completion and received laptops. A major outcome for the HSHT program is that the graduation rate for students who participated in the 2011-2012 school year was over 94% compared to 81% overall for students with disabilities.

GSU STUDENTS AND FACULTY ATTEND VR PROGRAM MEET AND GREET

On March 14, 2013 the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program hosted its first "Meet and Greet" session with students from Georgia State University (GSU) to highlight and promote internship opportunities with the VR Program as part of its efforts to re-

cruit VR Counselors. The VR Program would like to host up to 12 paid internships for students from the current graduating class. Seven students and four faculty members from GSU participated in this meeting with VR managers, counselors and other staff. The VR staff shared

their own VR internship experiences and explained how these opportunities could benefit the students. All the students said that they were very excited about the internship possibilities.

Friends Helping Friends Beauty Pageant and Concert

Saturday, April 20th at 5 PM
Elbert Co Middle School Auditorium
Concert at 7 PM
Tickets (include Concert) - \$5 at the door!

Taste of Elberton Restaurants food court available in the cafeteria 6-8 PM - \$5

Thank you for supporting our precious
students who have extra special needs!!
Bring your family and friends for an extra special blessing!

People's Choice Award Votes - \$1
Pageant shirts - \$10
FHF bags - \$5



**ALL donations to FHF
are tax deductible!**

Pageant program ads available:
deadline - March 22

Sandy Adams - sadams@elbert.k12.ga.us
706-213-4100, ext. 4194
Chrystal Thomas - cthomas@elbert.k12.ga.us
www.friendshelpingfriendsclub.com

GEORGIA INDUSTRIES FOR THE BLIND

GIB AND ISO 9000

In April and May, the Georgia Industries for the Blind (GIB) has its International Organization for Standardization (ISO) certification audits scheduled. The ISO 9000 family of standards is related to quality management systems designed to help organizations ensure that they meet the needs of customers and other stakeholders while meeting statutory and regulatory requirements related to the product. Independent audits confirm that organizations meet the requirements of ISO 9001. Over a million organizations worldwide are independently certified, making ISO 9001 one of the most widely used management tools in the world today.

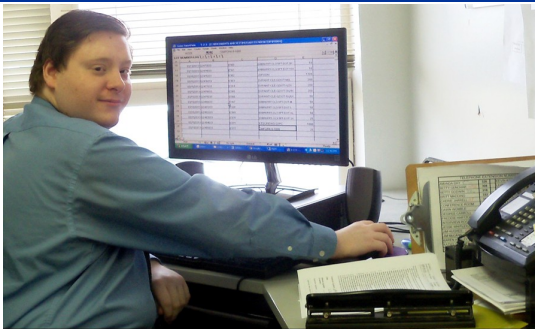
It is widely acknowledged that proper quality management improves business with a positive effect on investment, market share, sales growth, sales margins, competitive advantage, and avoiding litigation. The quality principles in ISO 9000:2000 are also sound and provide a comprehensive model for quality management systems that can make any company competitive.

Implementing ISO often gives the following advantages:

- creates a more efficient, effective operation
- promotes international trade
- increases customer satisfaction and retention
- increases profit
- reduces audits
- reduces waste and increases productivity
- enhances marketing
- common tool for standardization
- improves employee motivation, awareness, and morale

GIB is proud to have been ISO compliant since 2004 and looks forward to having this audit certify that it meets these stringent quality standards.

GIB SUCCESS STORY



Allison Brown, Admin Clerk—GIB Griffin

GIB has been creating employment opportunities that enable blind employees such as Allison Brown to be promoted into jobs traditionally held by sighted individuals.

Allison Brown has been employed as an administrative clerk at the GIB Griffin plant since January 2013 after VR services prepared him for

the job. Allison applied for VR in the fall of 2007 for assistance with barriers to employment due to his visual impairment. VR assessed his needs and provided counseling and informed choices in developing a work plan.

Allison credits the assistive technology and funding that VR provided

as keys to his ability to attend and graduate from technical school. After graduation, Allison worked with his VR Counselor to decide the best options for employment in his home town since he cannot drive. GIB notifies VR whenever there are job openings, and VR referred Allison to apply for this opening at GIB.

GIB recruiter Luis Narimatsu contacted Allison to set up the job interview and encouraged him to do well. Allison was thrilled when he got the job. He is happy to work in this organization that “devotes their resources to giving those with

“... happy to work in this organization that devotes their resources to giving those with vision problems that chance that most companies don’t give you to prove that you are just as good as a sighted person”

- Allison Brown

vision problems that chance that most companies don’t give you to prove that you are just as good as a sighted person”. Allison also states that he is not sure if “this dream would have been possible without VR”.

DISABILITY ADJUDICATION SERVICES

KUDOS TO THE DAS FRAUD STAFF



Carmen Henley & Tammy Hernandez
Cooperative Disability Investigators/Fraud Unit

Carmen Henley and Tammy Hernandez, staff members of the Cooperative Disability Investigations (CDI)/Fraud Unit at Disability Adjudication Services

(DAS), deserve kudos for their dedicated work. They are part of this joint venture between federal and state agencies to prevent fraud in the Social Security Administration's (SSA) disability programs. They investigate individual disability claims and identify

claimants, lawyers, doctors, translators, or other third parties who facilitate disability fraud. If fraud is suspected, the case is passed on to state, federal and local law en-

forcement for further investigation.

When CDI investigations find fraud, disability claims are denied and benefits are not paid, resulting in substantial savings. In February 2013, the Atlanta Region CDI Units received a total of 94 fraud allegations/referrals to investigate, and their findings resulted in more than \$11 million in combined SSA and non-SSA savings. That represents 22 % of the nation's total savings of over \$49 million. For FY 13 to date, the Atlanta CDI Units have realized over \$47 million in combined SSA and non-SSA savings.

DAS EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH

Congratulations to **Jeffrey Jones** for his selection as the April 2013 Employee of the Month. The following nomination was submitted by Ayanna Conley in the category of Agency Commitment:

"Jeffery Jones should be praised for his outstanding work as a DAS employee. Jeff has been with the agency since 1994 and a state employee since 1986. He processes initial, reconsideration, disabled child, and continuing disability review cases. Jeff has continuously exceeded expectations in caseload size, processing time, APA's, quality, and aged cases. So far during

this performance year, Jeff has processed 337 cases within an average of 59 days. He has written

"Jeffery Jones should be praised for his outstanding work as a DAS employee."

"He is a pleasure to supervise and is a very respected member of Unit 52."

Ayanna Conley, DAS—Unit 52 on Jeffery Jones

APAs on 73.59% of his determinations. His aged case percentage is 0.90% while maintaining a caseload size of 108. He has 100%

substantive quality and he has not received any customer service lags or customer phone complaints.

Jeff consistently demonstrates superior skill and knowledge of the disability program. He was nominated last year as PRIDE Examiner of the Year. He is a pleasure to supervise and is a very respected member of Unit 52. Jeff is an exemplary Adjudicator and we value his commitment to excellence and providing outstanding service to the claimants we serve. I am proud to nominate Jeffery Jones for Employee of the Month."

Way to go, Jeffrey!

ROOSEVELT WARM SPRINGS

NEWNAN RESIDENT RECOVERS FROM SERIOUS ACCIDENT AT THE WARM SPRINGS INSTITUTE

Contributor: Mike Shadix

On December 22, 2012 Loretta Hightower experienced terrible injuries in a vehicle accident that caused a crushed pelvis, fractured hip, bruised spleen, torn kidney, broken ribs and a collapsed lung. Life Flight carried her to Atlanta Medical Center where a tracheotomy with a respirator kept her alive, and her body began to heal.



Loretta Hightower undergoing intensive physical therapy at the Roosevelt Warm Springs Inpatient Center

By Mid-January 2013, Loretta was ready to be transferred to a long term acute care setting until she could breathe on her own again. Loretta and her husband chose Roosevelt Warm Springs (RWS) because they knew others who had been successfully treated there. On January 19, staff at the Long Term Acute Care Hospital began the delicate process of weaning her from the respirator. RWS opened a three-bed respirator unit in February 2011. Since then, it has treated 20 ventilator patients with an 80% successful weaning rate.

Loretta, a paramedic/EMT by profession, greatly appreciated the gentle and reassuring way the RWS staff explained every step of the process. She was also impressed with the sterile technique which is particularly important in respirator care because of the constant threat of pneumonia. On February 14, she transferred to the RWS Inpatient Rehabilitation Hospital to continue her recovery.

"Coming to Wars Springs has been nothing but a blessing."

Loretta Hightower

Patient, RWS Institute

After spending a couple weeks of therapy to get her strength back and begin walking again, Loretta returned to her Newnan home. "Coming to Warm Springs has been nothing but a blessing," she said. "With the support of my family, my friends and the staff of Roosevelt Institute, I have learned that I am able to do what it takes to make a full recovery."

ROOSEVELT WARM SPRINGS

20TH GEORGIA HALL SOCIETY BALL HELD AT WARM SPRINGS

Friends of Roosevelt Institute gathered in Warm Springs on February 23 for the 20th Georgia Hall Society Ball. The Roosevelt Warm Springs Rehabilitation Development Fund, an independent 501(c)3 corporation, holds the ball each year to honor major contributors to the Development Fund and raise money to support the programs at the Institute.

“... together we advanced the mission of Roosevelt Institute to empower people with disabilities.”

- Dr Paige Collins,
Planning Committee

Dr. Paige Collins of Valley, AL led the planning committee and a corps of dedicated volunteers to transform historic Georgia Hall into a “winter wonderland” for the event that included dinner, live music, dancing and a silent auction. Over 100 guests from the West Central Georgia area and Metro Atlanta attended.

“I think everyone had a great time,” Dr. Collins said, “and together we advanced the mission of Roosevelt Institute to empower people with disabilities.” Collins, a dentist, has been a member of the Development Fund Board for three years. This is the second year that she has served as Chair of the ball committee. Major corporate sponsors for the ball included Kia Motors Manufacturing Georgia and J. Smith Lanier & Company.

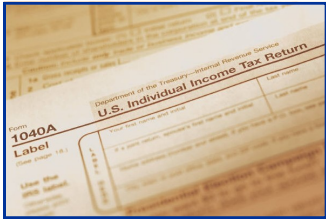


Attendees at the annual Georgia Hall Society Ball in Warm Springs gathered for dinner in the same room that FDR used to host his annual Thanksgiving dinner with the patients of the Georgia Warm Springs Foundation.



Dr. Ken Dobbs, Chair—RWS Development Fund with Bill Bulloch, Executive Director of Roosevelt Warm Springs.

FIVE TAX CREDITS THAT CAN REDUCE YOUR TAXES



Contributed by Shanti Aaron

These are from the IRS Tax Tip 2013-33. A tax credit reduces the amount of tax you must pay. A refundable tax credit not only reduces the federal tax you owe, but also could result in a refund.

Here are five credits to consider:

1. The Earned Income Tax Credit is a refundable credit for people who work and don't earn a lot of money. The maximum credit for 2012 returns is \$5,891 for workers with three or more children. Eligibility is determined based on earnings, filing status and eligible children. See Publication 596, Earned Income Credit.
2. The Child and Dependent Care Credit is for expenses you paid for the care of your qualifying children under age 13, or for a disabled spouse or dependent that enabled you to go to work. See Publication 503, Child and Dependent Care Expenses.
3. The Child Tax Credit may apply to you if you have a qualifying child under age 17. The credit may help reduce your federal income tax by up to \$1,000 for each qualifying child you claim on your return. See Publication 972, Child Tax Credit.
4. The Retirement Savings Contributions Credit (Saver's Credit) helps low-to-moderate income workers save for retirement. You may qualify if your income is below a certain limit and you contribute to an IRA or a retirement plan at work. The credit is in addition to any other tax savings that apply to retirement plans. For more information, see Publication 590, Individual Retirement Arrangements (IRAs).
5. The American Opportunity Tax Credit helps offset some of the costs that you pay for the first four years of post-secondary education. The maximum credit is \$2,500 per eligible student. Forty percent of the credit, up to \$1,000, is refundable. For more information, see Publication 970, Tax Benefits for Education.

Make sure you qualify before claiming any tax credit. Visit IRS.gov to learn about the rules or call 800-TAX-FORM (800-829-3676).

A GEORGIA LEGISLATIVE PRIMER



The 2013 legislative term is complete, and a number of people believe the process is finished. In Georgia, even if a bill has been approved by both chambers, there is still work to do. The Georgia General Assembly convenes on the second Monday of each January for a forty-day session. The primary function of the process is to pass the budget and to make the laws that govern Georgia. This involves the proposal of legislation, committee consideration, and finally action by the full house—a series of steps that have to be repeated in both houses.

Now that the session is over, however, a new stage—consideration by the governor—is officially underway. During a session, the governor can request that a particular bill be sent for signature or veto. But generally most bills are only sent to the governor following the end of the legislative session. The governor then has forty days to decide whether to sign the bill into law, veto the bill (in which event it is returned to the house where it was introduced for veto override consideration), or do nothing (which allows the bill to become law automatically at the end of the forty-day period).

As the legislature adjourned last month, work for the Governor's Office and other interested onlookers had just begun!

DISABILITY QUIZ

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT DISABILITY



1. An employer is required to provide additional insurance for employees with disabilities.	TRUE or FALSE
2. Considerable expense is necessary to accommodate most workers with disabilities.	TRUE or FALSE
3. There is a difference between a disability and a handicap.	TRUE or FALSE
4. When speaking with a person who is deaf, one should direct the conversation to interpreter/companion.	TRUE or FALSE
5. It is okay to finish sentences or supply words to people who have speech disorders.	TRUE or FALSE

Answers will be published in May Newsletter

DISABILITY QUIZ ANSWERS MARCH 2013 ISSUE



1. George, a successful businessman, has been wheelchair bound for 22 years (Wheelchair user" or "person who uses a wheelchair" is preferred, referring to the wheelchair as a tool rather than an entrapment.)
2. There are more than 58,000 handicapped people in the United States ("Differently abled" and "person with disabilities" are more appropriate than anything else like "handicapped.")
3. Today, with job training and support, retarded people can perform many needed jobs (Intellectually and developmentally disabled, cognitive disability, intellectual disability, or developmental disability are acceptable terms.)
4. Ellen, you are so competent on your job, that we often forget you are disabled (Ellen, you are so competent on your job. If someone is competent, no explanation is needed.)
5. Southern Bank is to be commended for their ongoing efforts to accommodate epileptics among their call center staff ("people with epilepsy" would be more appropriate.)

TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE GVRA NEWSLETTER OR TO THE GVRA DAILY EMAIL UPDATES, PLEASE SEND YOUR SUBMISSIONS TO KEVIN HARRIS, LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS AND COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR.

EMAIL: KEVIN.HARRIS@GVRA.GA.GOV